



JONATHAN E. FIELDING, M.D., M.P.H.
Director and Health Officer

JONATHAN E. FREEDMAN
Chief Deputy Director

313 North Figueroa Street, Room 806
Los Angeles, California 90012
TEL (213) 240-8117 • FAX (213) 975-1273

www.lapublichealth.lacounty.gov



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Gloria Molina
First District

Mark Ridley-Thomas
Second District

Zev Yaroslavsky
Third District

Don Knabe
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich
Fifth District

February 4, 2009

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. *JEF*

SUBJECT: **DINERS TO GET A QUICK GUIDE TO CLEANLINESS**

Enclosed is the New York Times article on New York's adoption of a restaurant grading system closely modeled after us.

Dr. Tom Frieden, Health Commissioner told me they did this because "Los Angeles had a better model." Thanks for your leadership and support of this very popular and effective program.

JEF:lag

Enclosure

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

RECENT DHS/DPH RELATED NEWS

New York Times - February 2, 2009

Diners to Get a Quick Guide to Cleanliness

By : GLENN COLLINS

For the first time, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will compel the city's nearly 25,000 restaurants to publicly post inspectors' cleanliness ratings, which have previously been available only online or at the department. Rating signs, to be supplied by the city, will be required to be visible from the street, either in a restaurant window or vestibule.

The agency also plans to switch to a letter-grade system similar to that used for years in Los Angeles (using the letters A, B and C for passing inspection grades). The new rules, which will be part of a broad revamping of inspections, will be put in place over the next two years, giving restaurant operators time to comply.

The department said that Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg signed off on the program as part of the executive budget announced Friday. He has scheduled a Saturday news conference to announce the new procedures.

"We expect this will improve our inspection program," said Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, the city health commissioner. "It will encourage restaurants to be cleaner and inform people so they can make better choices about where to eat."

Though the health department will lose millions of dollars as well as staff members in next year's budget, Dr. Frieden said he did not expect the inspection program to be cut because, he said, "it will result in more revenues for the city and fewer episodes of illness that the city might have to pay for."

In addition, the commissioner said he hoped to hire 45 additional restaurant inspectors, adding to the current total of 140, over the next two years, at a cost of \$4.8 million, to help implement the new program.

Dr. Frieden said it would improve the quality of the 800 million restaurant meals the department said were served in the city yearly. "Every day more than a thousand people get sick from eating in restaurants," Dr. Frieden said.

Some in the restaurant industry said they needed to study the details of the program, but "a major objection we have is that an inspection is a snapshot, it reflects a condition on a particular day, but not necessarily a long-term condition," said E. Charles Hunt, executive vice president of the New York City chapters of the New York State Restaurant Association. "It would be unfair to make owners post these ratings if a temporary judgment had been corrected."

Mr. Hunt added that he was concerned that the department would try to use the new system to bolster city revenue. "This could make it even worse for restaurant owners, making it more costly," he said.

But Elliott S. Marcus, an associate health commissioner, said the department did not plan to raise the schedule of fines, from \$200 to \$2,000, adding that restaurants scoring an A will pay less in fines.

"Possibly this presents another concern to restaurant owners in a very difficult economic time," Angus McIndoe, proprietor of a 160-seat restaurant at 258 West 44th Street, said of the

new system. "But you have to take health concerns seriously. If it makes things better for the general public, then maybe it will be better for us."

Dr. Frieden credited State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein for pressing the adoption of the new system. "It gives the public a clear and easily digestible statement about cleanliness," Senator Klein said. "And it will have chilling effect on restaurants, since the public will force them to comply."

Currently, city restaurants receive one inspection a year and are judged according to a point-ratings system.

Under the plan, restaurants receiving an A grade would stay on a yearly inspection cycle. Those with B grades would get two inspections, and those with C grades would get three. Those with public-health hazards will be closed until violations are corrected.